

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

LISTING OF CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A steering wheel arrangement comprising:
a steering wheel having a first gear element; and
a second gear element mounted on or mountable on a steering column, said first and second gear elements inter-engaging one another, the arrangement further including a first anti-backlash gear mounted directly on one of said gear elements, and a second anti-backlash gear mounted directly on said first anti-backlash gear, said first and second anti-backlash gears having teeth configured so as to align substantially with teeth of said one gear element, said first anti-backlash gear being rotatably biased relative to said one gear element towards a position in which said teeth of said first anti-backlash gear are displaced from said corresponding teeth of said one gear element, wherein said first and second anti-backlash gears are held in position by a retaining washer;

wherein said first and second anti-backlash gears are each in the form of a plate, each of said plates having an aperture therein, said aperture defining portions to engage spring elements, said apertures of said first and second anti-backlash gears being coaligned and receiving said spring elements;

wherein said spring elements are of substantially "C" shape, each of said spring elements passing through part of said aperture in one of said plates which engages said

spring element, and part of said aperture in said other plate which accommodates said spring element; and

wherein said part of said aperture that engages said spring element is an outwardly directed part of said aperture that is bifurcated and has two arcuate slots, each of said slots receiving part of said spring element, and said part of said aperture that accommodates said spring element is of a generally arcuate outwardly directed part of a periphery of said aperture.

2. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement according to claim 1, wherein said first and second anti-backlash gears are biased in opposite directions.

3. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement according to claim 1, wherein said gear element on which said first anti-backlash gear is mounted is a ring gear.

4. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement according to claim 1, wherein said gear element on which said first anti-backlash gear is mounted is a pinion gear.

5-8. (Cancelled)

9. (Previously Presented) A steering wheel arrangement comprising:
a steering wheel having a first gear element; and

a second gear element mounted on or mountable on a steering column, wherein one of said gear elements is a pinion gear; said first and second gear elements inter-engaging one another; the arrangement further comprising:

two anti-backlash gears mounted on one of said gear elements,

wherein said gear element on which said anti-backlash gears are mounted is said pinion gear, each said anti-backlash gear having teeth configured so as to align substantially with teeth of said gear element upon which it is mounted,

wherein said anti-backlash gear is rotatably biased relative to said gear element upon which it is mounted towards a position in which said teeth of said anti-backlash gear are displaced from said corresponding teeth of said gear element,

wherein said anti-backlash gears each being in the form of a plate, each said plate having an aperture therein, said aperture defining portions to engage spring elements,

wherein said apertures of said two anti-backlash gears are co-aligned for receiving said spring elements of substantially "C" shape, each said spring element passing through part of said aperture in one plate which engages said spring element and part of said aperture in said other plate which accommodates said spring element,

wherein said part of said aperture that engages said spring element is an outwardly directed part of said aperture that is bifurcated and has two arcuate slots, each said slot receiving part of said spring element, and

wherein said part of said aperture that accommodates said spring element is of a generally arcuate outwardly directed part of said periphery of said aperture.

10. (Currently Amended) A steering wheel arrangement comprising:

- a steering wheel including a first gear;
- a steering column including a second gear meshing with said first gear;
- a first anti-backlash gear directly mounted on one of said first gear and said second gear;
- a second anti-backlash gear directly mounted on said first anti-backlash gear;

and

- a plurality of spring elements for joining said two anti-backlash gears to said one of said first gear and said second gear, wherein said first and second anti-backlash gears are rotatably biased relative to each other and to said one of said first gear and said second gear, wherein one of said first and second anti-backlash gears engages a first face of a tooth of the other of said first gear and said second gear, and the other of said first and second anti-backlash gears engages a second face of another tooth of said other of said first gear and said second gear;

wherein said plurality of spring elements are formed from a sheet spring material in a substantially "C" shape;

wherein at least one of said plurality of spring elements extends through a first aperture in said one of said first and second anti-backlash gears and through a second aperture in said other of said first and second anti-backlash gears; and

wherein one of said first and second apertures is an arcuate shape and the other of said first and second apertures is a bifurcated shape, said at least one of said plurality of spring elements including ends extending into said bifurcated shape.

11-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 10, wherein said first and second anti-backlash gears are identically configured.

14. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 13, wherein said identically configured anti-backlash gears are inverted with respect to one another.

15-18. (Cancelled)

19. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement of Claim 10, further comprising a washer having a collar, said collar securing said washer to said one of said first gear and said second gear.

20. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement according to claim 10, wherein said one of said first and second gears on which said first anti-backlash gear is mounted is a ring gear.

21. (Previously Presented) The steering wheel arrangement according to claim 10, wherein said one of said first and second gears on which said first anti-backlash gear is mounted is a pinion gear.